

# News from Councilmember Steven Silverman



Montgomery County Council • 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850  
240/777-7960 • e-mail: [steven.silverman@co.mo.md.us](mailto:steven.silverman@co.mo.md.us)

Summer 2000

Dear Friends,

When I ran for the County Council in 1998, my top three priorities were "kids, cars, and communities." Those priorities meant quality education for all children, targeting the early years; real transportation solutions including roads and transit; and more libraries, recreation centers, and parks, so important to creating and sustaining our local communities in this huge county of over 800,000 people.

I am very excited at the progress we've made in all of these areas in such a short time.

Thanks to the strong economy and productivity of our residents and businesses, we have been able to invest in the future of our county. We have used tax resources for schools, roads, and other capital infrastructure that will last for decades, a fiscally responsible use of resources that may not be there in the future. And we have made our largest investment in the most important one – our children's education.

I am pleased to share with you some of the highlights from Council actions this year.

*Steve*

## Education: Smaller Is Better

"This is an education budget that tackles head-on the opportunity gap facing our children," said council member Steven A. Silverman (D-At Large). "It provides funding to implement the [Superintendent Jerry] Weast agenda. It's a quantum leap."

~ *Washington Post*  
May 18, 2000



The budget approved by the County Council this May marks a turning point in our commitment to providing equal educational opportunities for all our children. We have answered Superintendent Weast's Call to Action to Raise the Bar and Close the Gap.

I firmly believe that the most important step we can take to narrow the unacceptable minority achievement gap is to focus on the early years and to dramatically lower class size in kindergarten and grades one and two. I see the need each week when I read to first graders at Beall Elementary in Rockville. I see the opportunity gap every time I volunteer in my son's second grade class at Cresthaven Elementary in Silver Spring. It's an exciting yet hectic place, with some children who won't sit still, others who can't complete simple tasks, a few who show the benefits of quality preschool preparation. The achievement gap between the children with opportunities and those without is glaringly apparent even in these second graders.

The budget we have approved will start us on the path to give all children in these early grades the individual time and attention they need to succeed. We will expand full day kindergarten over two years to approximately 21 schools with a high number of at-risk students and begin a three year initiative to lower class size dramatically to 17 children in grades K-2 at 55 high need schools. Relief is also on the way for overcrowded high school classes.

(continued)

At the same time, we funded a major boost in resources to improve and support quality teaching through professional development. We will also expand parental and business involvement in the education of our children. All of us remember the teacher who made a difference in our lives. It's the teacher in the classroom and the principal heading the school who are the key to student success. We need to give them the tools to succeed.

I know all of us in our own way will answer the Call to Action. The county's future depends on it. Our State Superintendent, Nancy Grasmick, underscored the imperative saying, "I do not exaggerate when I say that nothing else even comes close to forecasting our economic vitality into the next century as our ability to close the racial and ethnic achievement gap."

### School Gyms - It's Elementary

As part of our actions on the Capital Budget, I am especially pleased that we were able to fund 11 new elementary gyms over the next six years. Three schools in Germantown and Bethesda will get sorely needed gyms next year with more communities to follow in future years. Kids need healthy physical activities as part of their education, and these gyms also help meet community demand for recreation programs after school.

## Dreams of Fields – And Recreation Centers, Trails, and Legacy Open Space

Kids of all ages will have more ballfields to pursue their dreams of becoming the next Cal Ripken or Mia Hamm—or just have plain old good fun playing ball.

As the Lead Councilmember for Parks and Recreation, I have made it a major priority to build better ballfields in the county. New ballfields will be ready for play in the upcoming fiscal year at Ridge Road Park in Germantown and Ovid Hazen Wells Park in Clarksburg.



SoccerPlex Groundbreaking



Opening of Shirley Povich Field  
in Cabin John Regional Park

Turf is growing on the fields at the SoccerPlex in South Germantown Recreational Park and will be ready to host the Washington area's largest girls' soccer tournament this October.

We also have made a major effort to upgrade the fields we already have. By the end of the upcoming fiscal year we will have completed work on two-thirds of all needed field renovations at our middle schools and are making great progress on elementary school fields. Since it makes no sense to renovate a field and then fail to maintain it, we will invest significant new funds to maintain our ballfields so that they stay in good playing condition. No more fields of ruts and concrete!

FOUR, COUNT THEM, FOUR new community recreation centers will be under construction during the approved six-year capital budget.

Thousands of kids in the Midcounty, North Bethesda, White Oak/Kemp Mill, and North Potomac will now have a place to go for after school activities and Friday night get togethers. Our senior citizens will have a gathering place for social, health, and other programs. Others in our community will have a center in their community for recreation classes, community meetings and the like.

These centers will be magnets and focal points for our communities, and I am very proud that we were able to make such headway on this campaign priority of mine.

Get out your bicycles, hiking boots, roller blades, and strollers – this budget gets us on our way to fulfilling the Countywide Trails Plan in 10 years or less.

This plan will build 13 miles of new hard surface trails and 31 miles of natural surface trails. Among the projects we'll see in the next few years are new trail connections or extensions in Black Hill Regional Park and Sligo Creek Park. We'll build Seneca Creek, Muddy Branch, Lower Magruder Branch, and Rachael Carson Conservation Park natural trails, as well as renovate existing trails in Rock Creek Park.

## Georgetown Branch Trestle

Speaking of Rock Creek Park, one of the major budget issues this spring was whether to fund the rebuilding of the trestle over Rock Creek for the use of hikers and bikers on the Capital Crescent Trail. In addition to hearing from hundreds of users of this trail, both proponents and opponents of the Georgetown Branch light rail weighed in on the issue as the trestle is planned to carry the light rail and adjacent trail once it is built between Bethesda and Silver Spring.

I am a long time ardent supporter of the Georgetown Branch light rail, but the earliest we will see it is six years from now and 8-10 years is probably a more realistic time frame. In the meantime, let's rebuild the trestle so people can use it. We can rebuild the bridge if we have to. I am for the trail and for the trolley.

With the trestle funding approved, thousands of hikers and bikers and other trail users will now have much better access to this segment of the Capital Crescent Trail. This trail is one of the recreational gems in Montgomery County and I look forward to the time when we will have a ribbon of green with a trail connecting Georgetown, Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Silver Spring and back through the District to Union Station. It will be a wonderful resource for bicycle commuters as well as providing sorely needed recreational and green space in our downcounty.

## A Legacy for Future Generations

The Council made a downpayment for future generations by providing \$33 million in county funds over the next six years for the new Legacy Open Space initiative. Proposed by our Planning Board under the leadership of Bill Hussmann, Legacy Open Space is a major conservation effort to protect open space land of exceptional significance in our county. Through acquisitions, easements, and other techniques, we will preserve forests and other natural resources, lands critical to the protection of the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers, historic places, farmland, trails, and green boulevards in our urban areas. By safeguarding these places for posterity we will enrich the quality of life in this county for generations to come.

## Transportation – A Moving Experience

Beleaguered commuters! Congestion relief is on the way with a number of state and county road and transit initiatives.

A record-breaking state transportation budget means major road and transit projects will be under construction in Montgomery County over the next few years. The state will rebuild interchanges at I-270/Old Georgetown Road and Fernwood Road/Democracy Blvd. Darnestown Road (MD 28) west of I-270 in North Potomac will be widened. US 29 commuters will get help from new interchanges at Randolph Rd., MD 198, and Briggs Chaney Rd. And the Georgetown Branch Trolley is moving forward with state funding to complete the required final environmental impact statement.

County transportation projects will also bring relief. After years of effort North Potomac residents will finally get a widened Travilah Road between Darnestown Rd. and Dufief Mill Rd. Damascus will see the extension of Woodfield Rd. from its current end in downtown Damascus to Ridge Rd. The Council also provided funds for detailed planning and property purchases to accommodate the Montrose Parkway. We'll be ready to make construction decisions during our next biennial capital budget review.

Mass transit also got a major boost with funds for new parking garages at the Shady Grove and Grosvenor Metro stations, as well as the Silver Spring Transit Center which will combine Metro, Ride On, and MARC stations.

The Council slashed the price for Ride On bus passes by 44% to encourage more transit use. We also stepped up special efforts to get more employees out of their cars and into transit in North Bethesda, downtown Bethesda and Friendship Heights.

## Housing: Building Neighborhoods to Call Home

Advocates for affordable housing scored a major victory this year with more than \$7 million earmarked for our Housing Initiative Fund, to help preserve affordable housing and revitalize our older communities.

The Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee, of which I am a member, devoted significant time and energy over the last year to tackling our county's affordable housing shortage.

A new initiative, *Building Neighborhoods to Call Home*, will help acquire and renovate rental properties in targeted neighborhoods, increase funding for rehabilitation loans for landlords of small rental properties, and target preservation of affordable rental housing in high-market job centers.



Grand Re-Opening of  
Amherst Square Apartments in Wheaton.



## Making Work ‘Work’

Prompted by proposed living wage legislation, last summer the Council had a robust debate on how best to help the working poor. Despite our strong economy, too many Montgomery County families have a tough time making work ‘work.’ Councilmember Mike Subin and I agreed that a targeted effort to help the working poor is the most effective approach. We offered a package of proposals picking up and expanding on the ideas in County Executive Duncan’s Rewarding Work initiative.

We authored legislation creating a local earned income tax credit, the first such local effort in the nation. We proposed funding for more child care and transportation help, job training and education, health care and housing assistance. We also expanded our Linkages to Learning program that emphasizes delivery of health and human services in neighborhood school settings.

Last fall the Council approved almost \$6 million in additional funding for these efforts and the funding support continues into next year’s budget as well. These actions will offer real help to people who work hard, play by the rules but are just not making it.

## Health and Human Services

Hubert Humphrey once said that you can judge a society by how it treats those at the dawn of life – the kids – in the twilight of life – our older residents – and those in the shadows of life – the needy and vulnerable.

### Kids ...

During this budget season, the Council received a preview of the Early Childhood Initiative. This effort will combine the resources of county government, the public school system, and the nonprofit community to create an integrated system that will protect the health and well-being of our youngest children. Recent brain research tells us that by doing so we will ensure that our children begin school ready to learn. After a thorough review of the initiative this summer, we anticipate funding expanded home visiting services, additional parent resource services, and strategies to increase the availability and quality of child care providers.

### Seniors ...

Our demographers tell us that the year 2000 will see twice as many seniors 85 and older as a decade ago. Think of the challenges those numbers present to all of us as we strive to support and protect the oldest members of our community.

The Council and Executive addressed this challenge in key areas affecting our senior population. We provided more funds to protect

residents in long term care facilities. Also, thanks to our budget actions, more elderly residents who can no longer cook, bathe, or dress without assistance will have the help they need to remain in the comfort and familiarity of their home.

Agencies providing skilled care to elderly residents will also get help. I proposed funds to assist in the major renovation of The Hebrew Home of Greater Washington into a center of excellence for Alzheimer and dementia care. We also provided funds for handicap access for a new group home as well as renovations to an existing group home.

### Needy and Vulnerable Adults ...

Even as we live through some of our brightest economic days, there are still thousands of homeless people in our community. When I first came to the Council, I was shocked to discover that on cold winter nights, the temporary shelter at Gude Drive housed up to 100 men sleeping on the floor with only blankets and sharing two toilets and a single shower. I saw the critical need for a permanent shelter for men with beds and adequate facilities. I took the lead with my colleague, Blair Ewing, and the Home Builders Care Foundation in getting this done. Thanks to a true partnership between the county and more than 100 private businesses, the new Gude Drive Men’s Shelter will open in December, in time for next winter.

The homeless have needs beyond simple shelter. I proposed and my colleagues agreed to provide funding to two other organizations that provide for these desperately needy individuals. Our financial support will help Shepherd’s Table to provide anyone in need with a hot meal every evening of the year. It will also allow them to embark on a second year of providing glaucoma screening, eye examinations, and glasses through their eye clinic. Mobile Med will be able to provide primary healthcare services at four sites instead of three this year via their mobile clinic, “*Moby*.”

## To Your Health...

Though we are living in a time of unprecedented medical discoveries and advances, not everyone benefits from them to the same degree. This year the Council funded the activities of two health initiatives aimed at identifying measures that will lessen the disparities in health and well-being in the African American and Latino communities.

The African American Health Initiative will focus on strategies to lessen the rates of HIV infection, infant mortality, diabetes, and oral health that disproportionately affect African Americans in our county.

Through the Latino Health Initiative, the county will work with this community to gain a better understanding of their needs, identify the gaps in services, and begin planning to fill those gaps. At my urging, the Council agreed to double the funding for this initiative to ensure that funds are committed for a

(continued)

thorough needs assessment and planning effort with extensive community involvement.

## Center for Cultural Diversity and New Americans Welcome Center

With the largest percentage of foreign born residents in the state of Maryland, Montgomery County needs a home base, a focal point for new Americans to find out about services and activities, as well as a meeting place for members of our diverse cultural communities. Out of this need for a 'port of entry' plans have begun for such a center. We provided funding for start-up staff and rent in leased space as this effort gets off the ground.

## Public/Private Partnerships

Each year the Council funds many worthwhile nonprofit organizations providing much needed services to our community. This year I championed the causes of several particularly worthwhile programs by securing additional county funding.



At Food and Friends kitchen with Executive Director, Craig Shniderman

*Food and Friends* delivers nutritious meals and groceries to people living with AIDS. When I first proposed funding last year, this organization had never received financial support from any county or state. I am very pleased that our lead has helped them to leverage support from other local and state governments.

*Christmas in April* will expand their activities from organizing large groups of volunteers to rehabilitate houses in a single day to tackling smaller scale projects all year long. They will also begin a pilot program that will enable them to link homeowners seeking housing rehabilitation assistance with social services resources that might be needed.

The *Korean American Association of the State of Maryland* promotes the full participation of the economically disadvantaged and newly arrived Korean speakers in our community by eliminating the language barrier.

*Jump Start Girls! Adelante Niñas!* works with young women to ease their transition into middle school while fostering academic

achievement, exploring career aspirations, and protecting their emotional and physical well-being.

The *Jubilee Association of Maryland* will be joining the excitement in downtown Silver Spring with the opening of the Jubilee Community Service Center to serve individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

## Libraries

...These are not books, lumps of lifeless paper,  
but minds alive on the shelves.

~ Gilbert Highet

Libraries are the 'quality' in the quality of life that makes Montgomery County such an attractive place to live and work. This year saw major progress in building new libraries for our residents. A new Rockville library will be built in the next three years. As an early and avid supporter, I agree with Rockville library advocates who said, "It's long overdue!" The Council also accelerated planning and design for the Germantown Library by three years.



## Arts for All

The beginning of this millennium will see an extraordinary county and state investment in theatres, film, dance facilities, art education centers, and a concert hall. Public funds and private support will help build all of the following:

Olney and Round House Theatres will have new stages, and the Bethesda Academy of Performing Arts will build a new children's performing arts theatre and school. Black Rock Center for the Arts in Germantown will house studios, gallery, and performing arts space. The acclaimed American Film Institute will move to a restored Art Deco Silver Theatre in Silver Spring.

And as a key part of this artistic renaissance, residents will have the opportunity to hear the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and its exciting Russian conductor in a new 2000 seat concert hall at the Strathmore Hall Arts Center in North Bethesda. This will be a unique cultural gem for the people of Montgomery County.



Montgomery County Council  
Councilmember Steve Silverman  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

BULK RATE  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 138  
Rockville, MD

## News from Councilmember Steve Silverman



To the Victor Belongs the Spoils – Paying off a bet placed during last fall's baseball playoffs, Councilmember and Cleveland Indians fan Nancy Dacek presents Cleveland's finest kielbasa to Boston Red Sox rooter Silverman. Councilmember Ike Leggett looks on. Despite the eventual fall to the Yankees, for Silverman and every other Red Sox fan, hope springs eternal for the 2000 season.

## Check out your County Council on the Web . . . and on the TV!

For information on the Montgomery County Council and the issues that affect you and your family, check out the Council on the Web at [www.co.mo.md.us/council](http://www.co.mo.md.us/council).

On County Cable Channel 55 (for cable-ready, Channels 5 or 6) you'll find full broadcasts of every County Council session, plus many public hearings, neighborhood Town Hall meetings, and other programs.

Check out the Channel 55 broadcast schedule on the Council Website or consult the inside back page of your Washington Post weekly TV magazine.